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ABSTRACT

This report is the first effort to stake out the territory to be included in research on the profession of educational media and technology (em/t), and explore the existing knowledge base within that territory. It comprises a set of questions, the answers to which cast a light on who is in the profession, where it is going, and what useful purposes its professionals serve. Question categories include: (1) definition of the field; (2) positions held; (3) compensations versus demands; (4) professional preparation and standards; (5) communications; (6) professional organizations; (7) the workplace; and (8) external forces. Two steps are seen as being critical to establishing the knowledge base of the em/t field: surveying the literature on the profession of educational technology and assessing the literature for adequacy, gaps, and obsolescence. The first step is reported here in the form of a selected bibliography of 100 works about the profession. It is based on a larger database of approximately 495 citations, that is published separately by Educational Technology Publications as "The Educational Technology Profession: A Bibliographic Overview of a Profession in Search of Itself" by J. Fred Olive. The second step is a larger task that still remains, and other scholars are invited to join in the endeavor. (Author/MAS)

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Title:

The Educational Media and Technology Profession: An Agenda for Research and Assessment of the Knowledge Base

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Introduction

Who are we? Where are we going? What useful purpose do we serve? Such introspective questions--although viewed as pointless by some--are necessary questions for a profession to ask of itself periodically. During the late 1980s the board of directors of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) undertook strategic planning for the future of association. They began by looking at the members who constitute the organization and who populate the educational media and technology (em/t) profession. As they did so, they realized that there are many questions about "who we are" and "where we are going" that could not be answered with any degree of certainty. The data either didn't exist or weren't readily accessible.

This dearth of information about the profession was considered serious enough to set up a task force, later a committee, on "Research on the Profession." This committee, chaired first by George Grimes and later by Michael Molenda, operated from 1990 to 1994 with the charge of doing something to remedy this information gap. The group decided that a long-term solution must include the promotion of continuing research about the educational media and technology profession and the establishment of a mechanism for making this research available to those seeking information.

Fortunately, the committee discovered early that Donald P. Ely, director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Information and Technology, had already committed the Clearinghouse to serving the storage and dissemination functions envisioned by the committee. From that point the committee focused on a strategy of:

-staking out the territory to be included in "research on the profession,"
-determining where the knowledge gaps are, and
-encouraging further research to fill those knowledge gaps.

This report is the first effort to stake out the territory and explore the existing knowledge base within that territory. It is the hope of the committee that this Agenda will stimulate interest among researchers and apprentice researchers. It comprises a set of questions, the answers to which cast light on who we are, where we are going, and what useful purpose we serve.

A preliminary draft of this paper was presented at the 1995 AECT annual convention. Reactions were given by Donald Ely, Sandy Patton, and Philip Doughty. Each made valuable substantive suggestions which have been incorporated into this "Proceedings" version.

The Agenda

I. Definition of the field

A. Boundaries: What is the currently accepted definition of the educational media and technology (em/t) field?

°within the profession

°among outside individuals and groups

B. Image: How is the field perceived?

°within the profession

°among outside individuals and groups

C. Historical Perspective: How have perceptions changed over time?

D. Justification for existence: Are em/t specialists needed? What valuable functions do they serve...within organization?...within society? What potential harm might be caused by ignorant, incompetent, or unethical practice? Are employers well informed about qualifications em/t professionals should possess?

II. Positions held

A. Position Titles: What positions are currently held by em/t professionals

...in schools?
...in higher education?
...in business/industry?
...in government?
...other?

B. Marketplace: What sorts of positions are currently being advertised?

C. Qualifications: What entry qualifications are expected by employers?

D. Marketplace Status: Is there a balance between supply and demand of graduates?

E. Roles: How are the roles of em/t specialists defined?

° What different roles are defined and advocated within the field?

° What different roles are actually being played by practitioners?

° What do exemplary performers do that makes them exemplary?

F. Career Paths: What are typical career paths followed by em/t professionals?

G. Position/Role Trends: Is there a pattern of change in the types of positions available, the supply of qualified applicants, the roles played, or career paths?

III. Compensations vs. Demands

A. Compensation Status: What are the current salary ranges for different positions? Other compensations?

B. Compensation Variables: Do salaries vary by educational level? Geographical location? Workplace? Gender? Other variables?

C. Compensation Trends: Is there a pattern of change in salaries or other compensations?

D. Job Demands: What responsibilities do em/t professionals have? What special stresses are they subjected to?
E. Job Demand Trends: How are job demands changing? How are stresses changing?

IV. Professional Preparation and Standards

A. Academic Study Opportunities: Where are degrees in em/t offered?

°Master's
°Specialist/Certificate
°Doctoral

B. Distribution of Students: How many students graduate from each program/degree?

C. Academic Curricula: What are the curricula offered in these programs? How do they differ?

D. Core Curriculum: To what extent is there agreement on a "core curriculum?"

E. Program Quality: Are there evaluative data about these programs? (e.g. relative to relevance of curricula to career preparedness)

F. Preparation/Practice Match: What sorts of training are most valuable in helping students become successful practitioners?

G. Academic Program Trends: Are the number or type of programs or graduates changing? Are the curricula changing? Are the programs flourishing, declining, remaining steady?

H. Continuing Professional Development: What sorts of continuing education are needed? Wanted?

I. Standards: What standards of professional competence or ethical codes are advocated? Enforced?

V. Communications

A. Communications among professionals: How do professionals communicate among themselves?

° adequacy of journals and periodicals

° accessibility of publications

B. Information sources: How is needed information stored and retrieved?

° accessibility of print and electronic databases

C. Linkages: How do professionals, individually and in groups, connect with others?

° on a local and regional basis?
° on a national basis?

° on an international basis?

VI. Professional Organizations

A. Membership: Which professional organizations do em/t professionals belong to?

°national level
°state level
°local level

B. Membership Overlap: To what degree is there overlap in membership among associations?

C. Association Functions: What sorts of services are offered or activities are undertaken by these associations?

D. Association Leadership: Who hold leadership positions in these associations? How are positions of leadership gained? What provision is made for leadership development?

E. Association Trends: Any change in the pattern of association membership? How are internal and external forces affecting the growth and health of professional organizations?

VII. The Workplace

A. Workplace Settings: In what organizational settings do em/t professionals work? (e.g. school or college media centers, local or state school agencies, university academic departments, corporations, etc.)

B. Workplace Satisfaction: Do em/t professionals experience satisfaction with their workplace environment?

C. Job Satisfaction: Do em/t professionals experience satisfaction in their jobs?

D. Workplace Trends: Are these organizational settings declining or growing in number? Are they declining or growing in financial support? Are roles changing? In what ways?

VII. External forces

A. Societal Forces: What societal forces are affecting the profession? What are the forces that assist or impede the appropriate adoption of technology in education?

B. Governance Forces: What changes are taking place in the governance of public K-12 education? Public and private higher education? How are these governance changes affecting the em/t profession? How do these forces aid or impede the appropriate adoption of technology?

C. Workplace Forces: What workplace forces are affecting the profession?

D. Technological Forces: How are technological forces affecting the profession? How does change in technology itself affect the adoption or rejection of technology in education and training?

E. Historical Patterns and Trends: Historically, what has been the impact of various external forces on the size of, shape of, or directions taken by the field?

The Knowledge Base

We see two steps being critical to establishing the knowledge base of the em/t field: first, surveying the literature on the profession of educational technology, and second, assessing the literature for adequacy, gaps, obsolescence, and so on. We are reporting the first step here in the form of a selected bibliography of works about this profession. It is based on a larger database--of some 495 citations--that is published separately by Educational Technology Publications as *The Educational Technology Profession: A Bibliographic Overview of a Profession in Search of Itself* by J. Fred Olive; edited by the series editor, William D. Milheim.

The second step entails a critical analysis of the database, assessing what is known for its completeness and up-to-date-ness and looking for gaps in the knowledge base. This is the larger task that still remains. We invite other scholars to join in this endeavor.

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